

believe we have to focus, as we look at transportation security, on ensuring that our thousands and thousands of rail passengers are safe.

I am grateful Amtrak has come forward with a specific plan to address the needs of those passengers. We need, for example, more police officers on our trains, more canine units to inspect the trains, more power and switch upgrades to ensure they absolutely run without any delay or disruption.

In New York, we have immediate safety concerns which demand we act now, not later—hopefully in time to make sure we are always moving—and, if there is any natural or other disaster, that we keep our people moving.

I want to bring to the attention of my colleagues some specific safety concerns. Anyone who has ever been on a train in or out of New York knows, I assume, that there are four tunnels under the East River and two tunnels under the Hudson River that serve as vital links between New York City and the surrounding area and the rest of America.

These tunnels were built in 1910, and now almost a century later they have not undergone any serious security upgrade. Under today's regulations, the tunnels would never be allowed to be constructed in the same shape in which they currently exist.

Penn Station in New York City is the busiest railroad station in the United States. More than 500,000 passengers, from all parts of our Nation, on more than 750 trains pass through Penn Station each day. As many as 300,000 commuters pass through the East River tunnels on the Long Island Railroad trains each day. So these tunnels are essential to our national railroad network and to the moving of people who commute every day in and out of New York City. The tunnels are so essential that we must turn our attention to ensuring they are safe for the hundreds of thousands of people who use them every single day.

If for some reason a train were to become incapacitated in one of our tunnels, the only means of escape would be through one of two antiquated spiral staircases on either side of the river or by walking in the dark almost 2 miles out of the tunnels. These are also the only routes by which firefighters and other emergency workers can get into the tunnels.

I have a picture, and it shows a narrow 10-flight spiral staircase which serves as the evacuation route for passengers as well as the means for rescue workers to enter the tunnels. I can barely even imagine what the situation would be like under the ground, under the rivers, if some kind of disaster were to occur, with passengers and crew trying to move up this narrow spiral staircase and rescue workers trying to move down; or, in the alternative, people being, in some instances, carried or trying to get out on their own going 2 miles in whatever conditions existed at the time.

I bring this to the attention of my colleagues because I think it is imperative, as we look at transportation security, that we do not turn our backs on the hundreds of thousands of people every single day who use our railroads. I fully support adding air marshals on our flights. I support federalizing the inspection that passengers and cargo and luggage must go through, and I support doing everything we humanly can think of that will guarantee to the American public we are doing all that can be imagined to make our airlines safe.

I also want to be able to stand in front of the people in my State who rely on these trains to get to and from work, who rely on these trains to commute, who travel out of New York City, and people all over our country who similarly rely on our trains, that they also will be secure. We don't want to leave any American out of our security efforts. This is an opportunity to do right what is required, what we now know will prepare America for any future problems.

The airline security bill, which I hope we will be considering soon, calls for the creation of a Deputy Secretary of Transportation Security who will be responsible for the day-to-day operations of all modes of transportation. I applaud this provision. I think it is long overdue. It certainly will be a strong endorsement of the kind of broad-based security required for our millions of airline passengers, for those who use our ports, for those who come in and out of our transportation network, and for the 20 million passengers who rode Amtrak last year.

Over a week ago—it is hard to keep track of time in the last weeks—40 of our colleagues took the train to New York City. I am so grateful. For some, it was the first time they had been on the train. It was fun to see their surprise and enjoyment provided by the ride to and from New York City. They were, in a sense, following in the footsteps of the hundreds of thousands of people who either have used trains out of necessity or out of choice for years or who were forced to use trains in the wake of September 11. And, thank goodness, the trains were there.

I cannot even begin to calculate the economic and psychological costs we would have suffered had we been totally shut off. We could not have moved people as easily as we did if Amtrak had not responded as well as it did in putting on additional equipment and personnel.

I hope my colleagues will remember this picture of this spiral staircase. I hope they will think about everyone they have ever known who perhaps has been a passenger, as I have been many times on these trains, through these tunnels. I hope they will join in the commitment we must make to every single American that we will guarantee the highest possible level of security for all transportation. It is the least we can do. I look forward to working with my colleagues to make sure it happens.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Before the Senator leaves the Chamber, I appreciate the invitation from her and Senator SCHUMER to travel to New York. Having traveled on the train on a number of occasions, I have always enjoyed it. That day it was not a time of enjoyment but a time for learning. It is a trip I will never forget. We have seen and understand a little bit better the devastation, the hardship, and the sorrow of the people of New York.

I express publicly my appreciation and the appreciation of the people of Nevada for the great work the Senator has done representing the State of New York in these events following September 11. What a pleasure it is to serve with her in the Senate.

EXTENSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in a period of morning business until 4 o'clock today, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Wyoming.

AVIATION SECURITY

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I will talk about where we are with regard to aviation security. I appreciate very much the comments of the Senator from New York and her information about railroad security. I certainly agree with her that we have to look at all our transportation systems and, indeed, we have an opportunity to look at it all. If it is different in different parts of the country. Of course, we don't have to have Amtrak trains in Wyoming. Nevertheless, I fully understand the importance of railroads.

I raise the question of how we complete the work before the Senate. Hopefully we will have back this afternoon a bill to improve aviation security. It is called the Aviation Security Act, and it has been developed for that very purpose. It has to do with the Deputy Administrator for Aviation Security. It has to do with the Aviation Security Coordinating Council. It has to do with training and improving flight deck integrity.

This bill is an aviation bill. We have a number of things on which we have not quite yet come together on this bill, but I think our challenge is to pass this bill. I don't think there is anyone who would argue on the point of the Senator from New York that we need to do that and we need to get to railroads, but I guess there is a question as to whether those issues will hold up doing what we want to do with regard to aviation. That is the question before the Senate. Hopefully, it will be resolved shortly so we can move forward.

Obviously, there are unique aspects to airlines and airports. There needs to